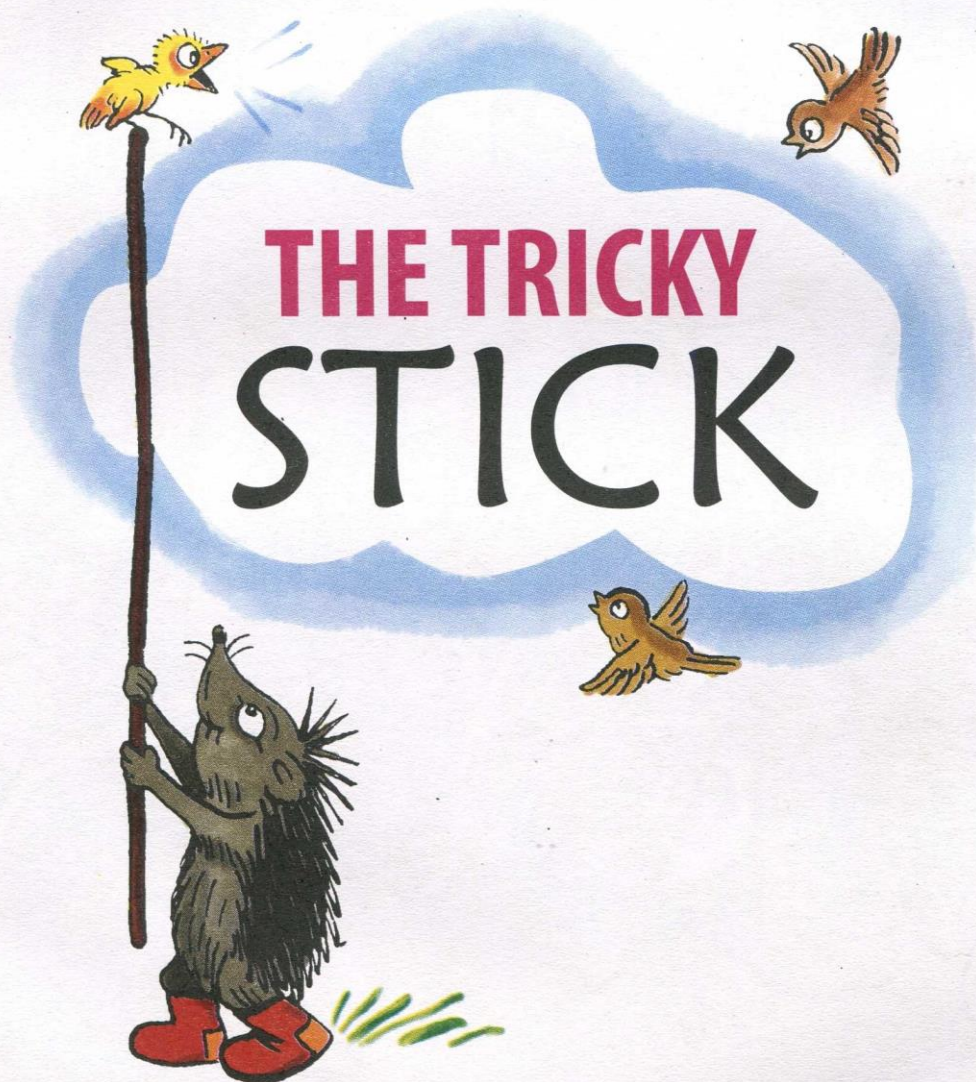


V. Suteyev

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A Hedgehog was on his way home. A Rabbit joined him and they went on together. You get there twice as fast if you have someone to walk with you.

They had a long way to go and talked as they walked along.

A stick was lying across the road.

The Rabbit was busy talking and did not notice it until he stumbled over it and nearly fell.

"Hmph!" he said angrily and kicked it. It flew off to a side.

But the Hedgehog Picked up the stick, put it over his shoulder and ran after the Rabbit.

When the Rabbit saw the Hedgehog carrying the stick he was very surprised.

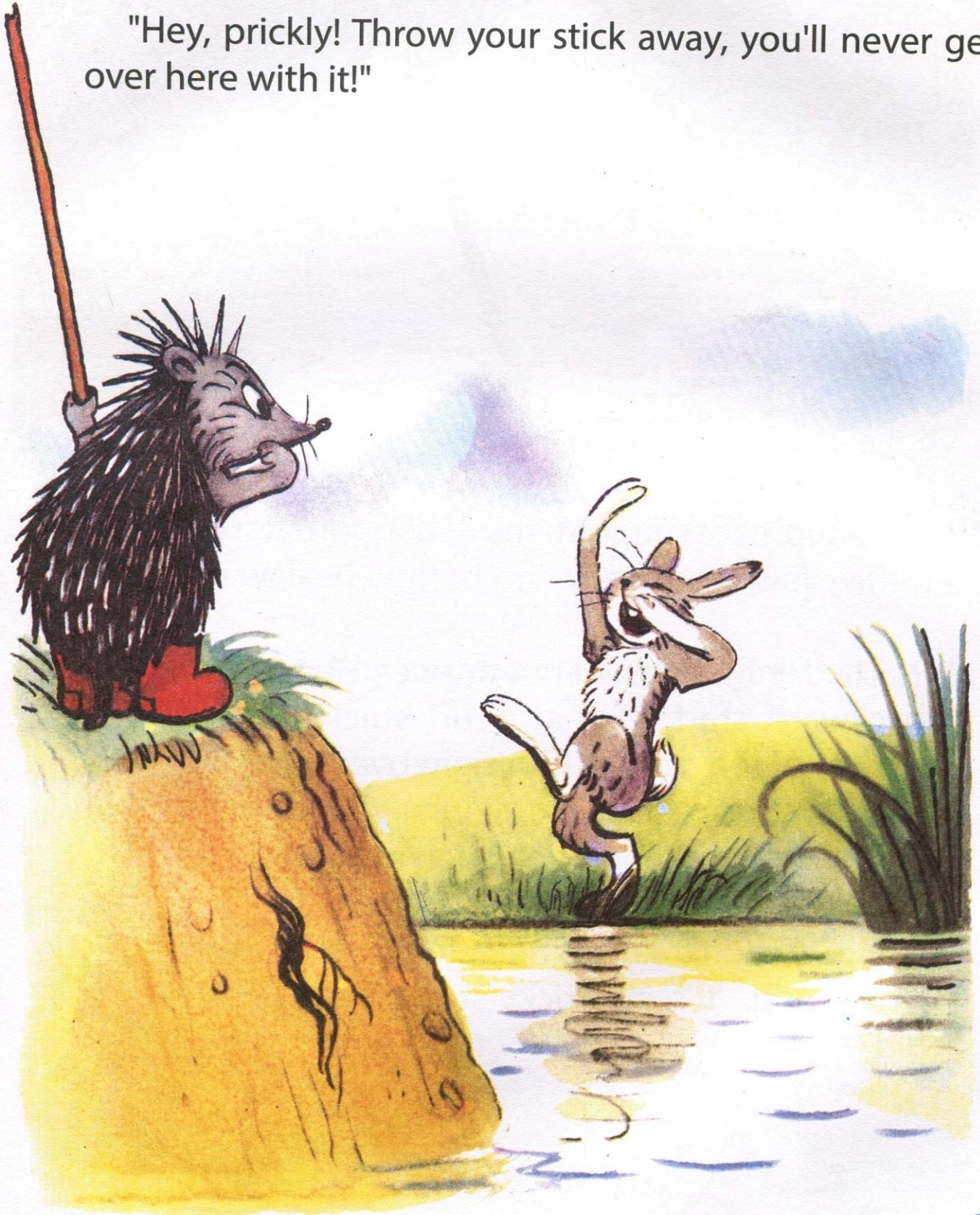
"What do you need a stick for? What good is a stick?"

"It's not a plain, ordinary stick," the Hedgehog explained. "It's a Tricky-Stick."

The Rabbit snickered.



They went on and soon came to a stream.
The Rabbit hopped right across to the other side and
shouted:
"Hey, prickly! Throw your stick away, you'll never get
over here with it!"





The Hedgehog did not answer. He took a few steps backward, started off at a run, stuck his stick into the middle of the stream, flew right over it and landed next to the Rabbit.

The Rabbit's mouth fell open in wonder.

"What a good jumper you are!"

"No, I don't know how to jump at all," said the Hedgehog. "It's my Tricky-stick-so-fast-and quick that did it."



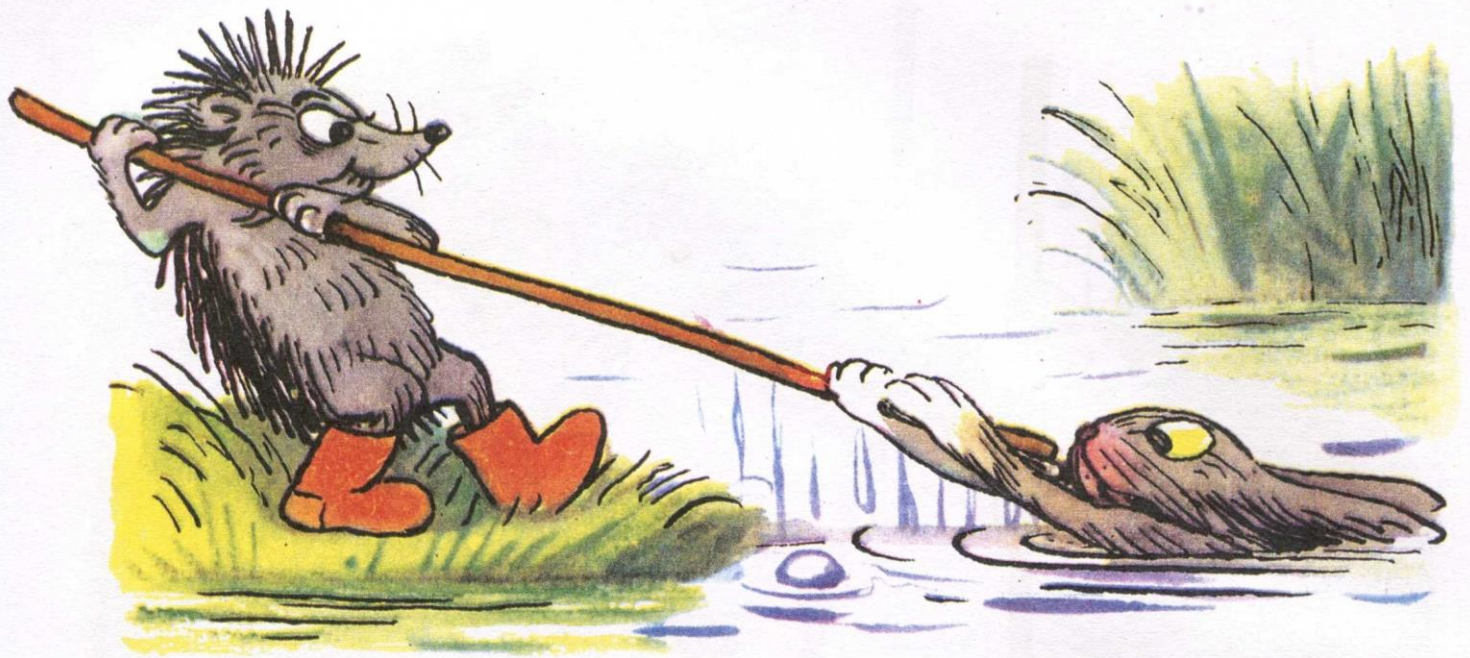
Soon they were on their way again. After a while they came to a swamp.

The Rabbit hopped from mound to mound. The Hedgehog walked behind him, feeling his way with his stick.

"Hey, Prickly! Why are you crawling along so slowly? Your stick is...."

But before the words were out of his mouth, he slipped and fell into the water, right up to his very ears. He could have really drowned.





The Hedgehog made his way over to the Rabbit and shouted:

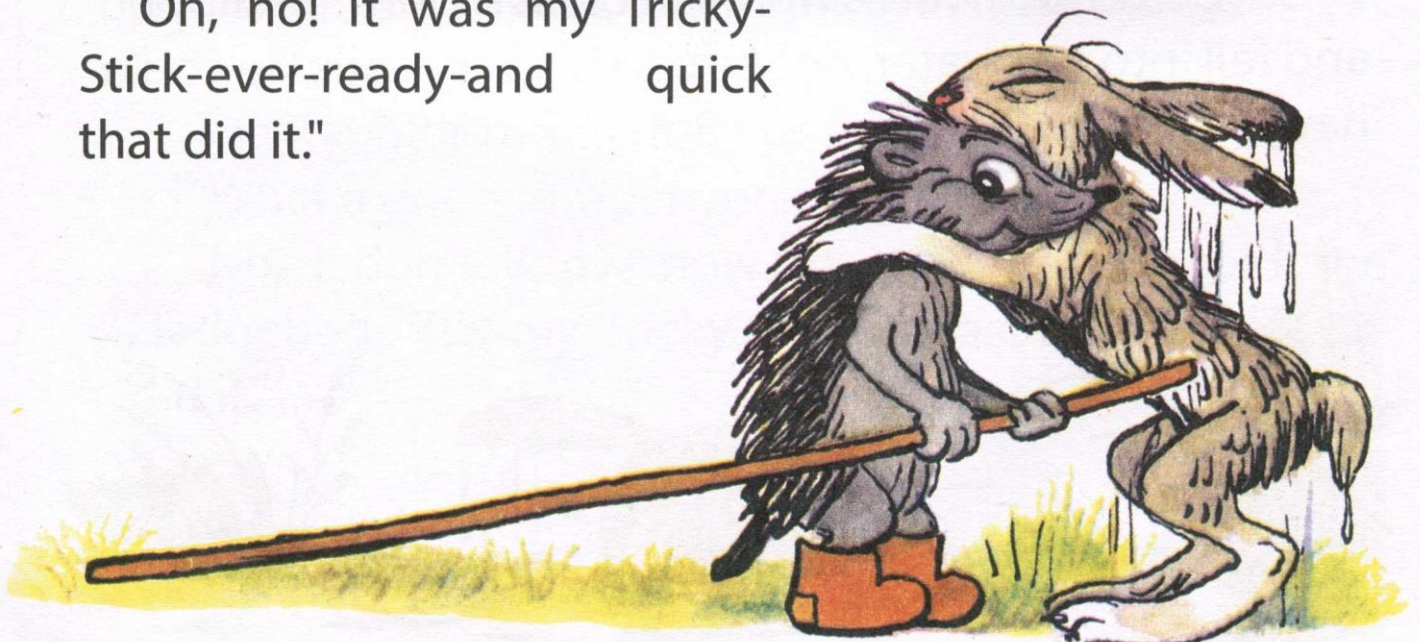
"Grab hold of the stick! Hand on now!"

The Rabbit grabbed the stick. Then the Hedgehog pulled with all his might and yanked his friend out of the swamp.

Later, when they were on dry ground again, the Rabbit said:

"Thank you, Hedgehog. You saved my life."

Oh, no! It was my Tricky-Stick-ever-ready-and quick that did it."



They set off again. At the edge of a great dark forest they saw a baby bird on the ground. It had fallen out of its nest and was chirping pitifully, while its parents flew about, not knowing what to do.

"Help! Help!" they cried.

The nest was too high to reach. And neither the Hedgehog nor the Rabbit knew how to climb. But they wanted to help.





The Hedgehog thought it over and suddenly had an idea.

"You stand facing the tree!" he said to the Rabbit.

The Rabbit did as he was told. Then the Hedgehog set the baby bird on the tip of his stick, climbed up onto the Rabbit's head, reached up high as he could, nearly touching the nest.

The baby bird chirped again and hopped right into the nest.

How happy his mother and father were! They flew around and around the Rabbit and the Hedgehog, chirping:

"Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!"

"Good for you. Hedgehog! That was a good idea!" The Rabbit said.

"Oh, no! That was my Tricky-Stick-Pick-them-up-quick that did it.

They entered the forest. The farther they went, the darker it got. The Rabbit was scared. But the Hedgehog marched along bravely, moving the branches apart with his stick.

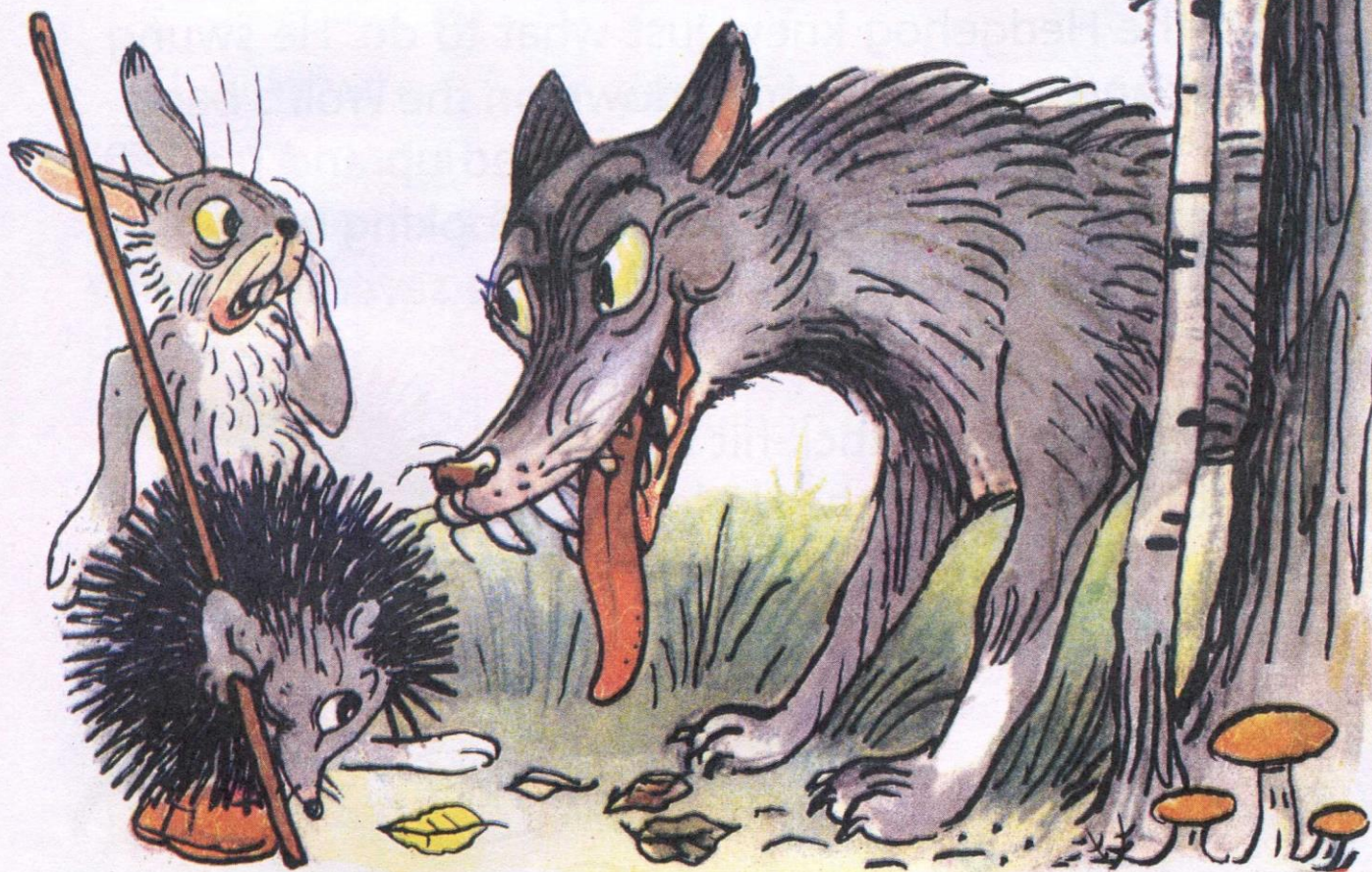
Suddenly, a huge Wolf jumped out at them. He blocked their way and growled.

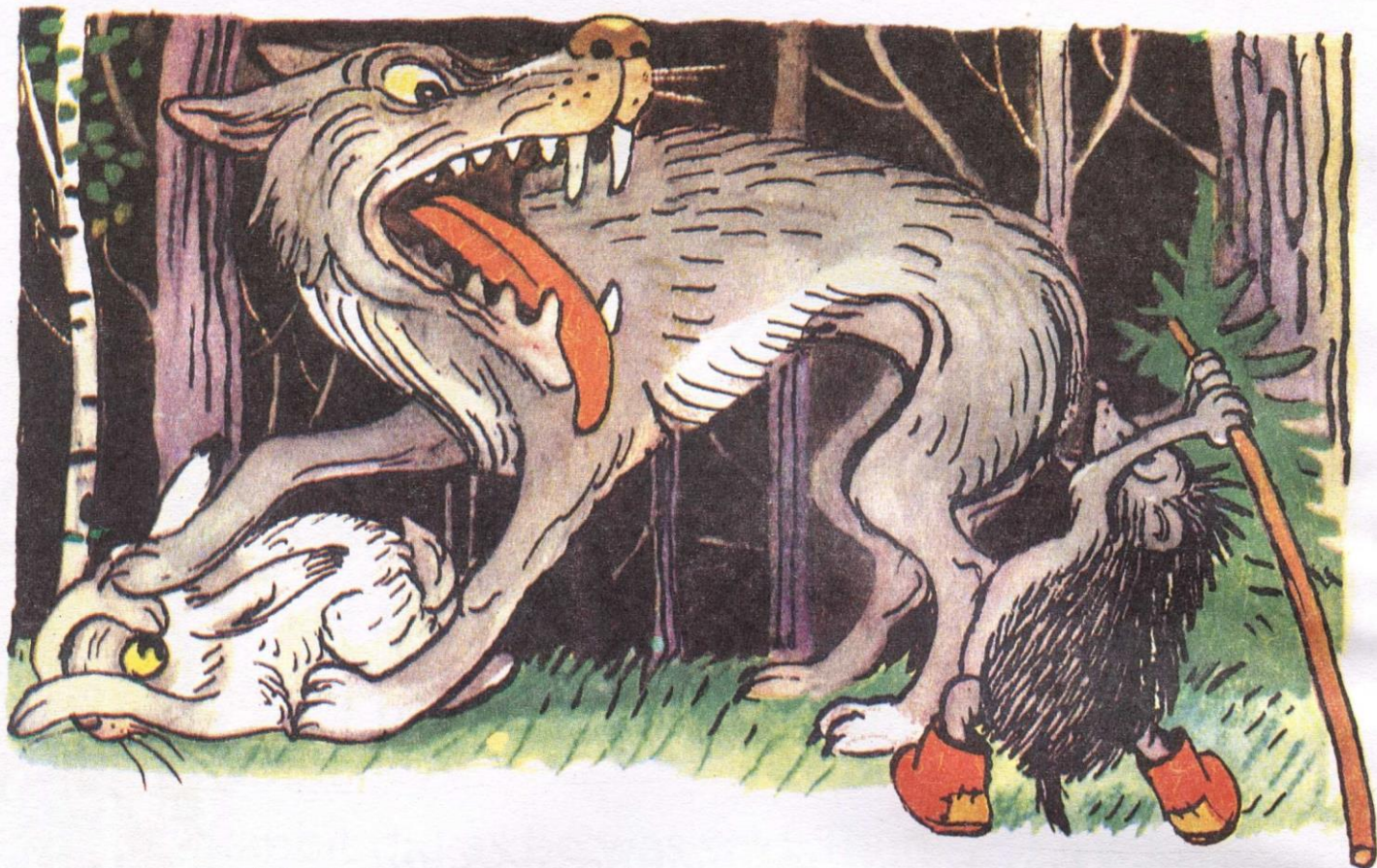
"Stop!"

The Rabbit and Hedgehog stopped.

The Wolf licked his chops and smacked his lips.

"I won't touch you, Hedgehog, you are too prickly, but I'll swallow you whole, fuzzy Rabbit!"





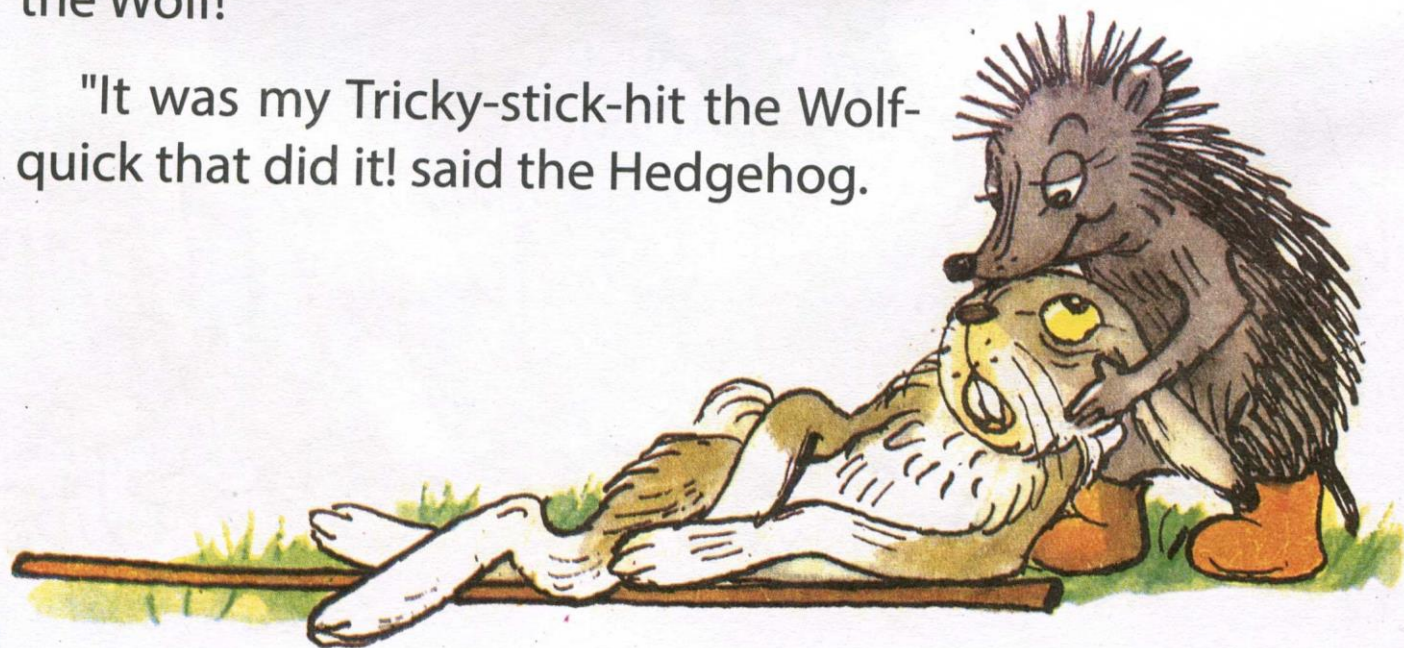
The Rabbit began to tremble from fright. He turned as white as snow, his feet seemed stuck to the ground, he couldn't even run. Then he closed his eyes, waiting for the Wolf to swallow him.

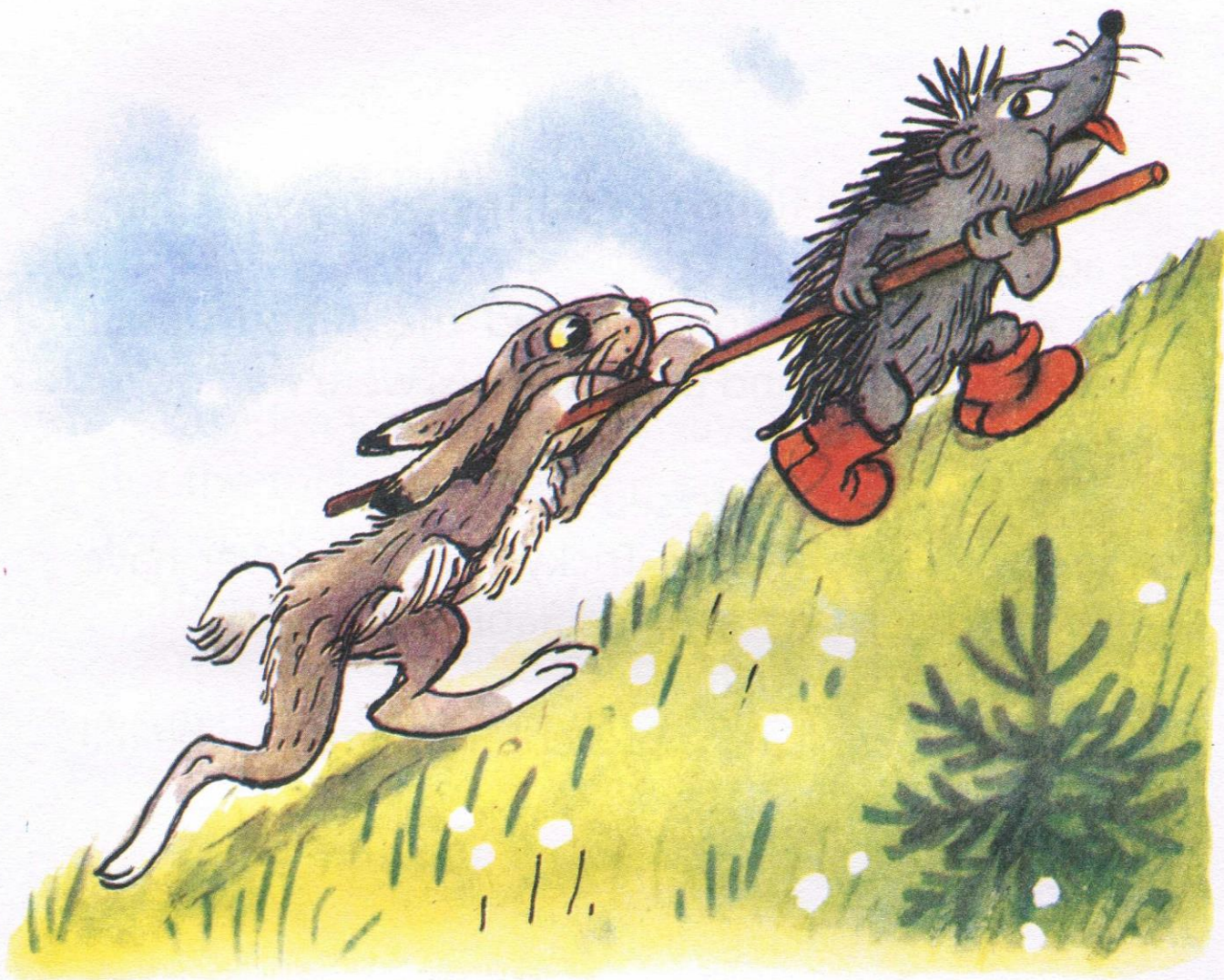
But the Hedgehog knew just what to do. He swung his stick and it came crashing down on the Wolf's back.

The Wolf howled from pain, jumped up and ran off. He kept right on running, never once looking back.

"Thank you, Hedgehog. Now you've saved me from the Wolf!"

"It was my Tricky-stick-hit the Wolf-quick that did it! said the Hedgehog.





They went on. Soon they came out of the forest and reached a road. The road wound up a steep hill.

The Hedgehog led the way, leaning on his stick as he walked, but the poor Rabbit was ready to drop, he was so tired.

When they had nearly reached home, the Rabbit said he could go no farther.

"Wait," said the Hedgehog. "Hold on to my stick."

The Rabbit grabbed hold of the stick and the Hedgehog began pulling him uphill.

It was much easier that way.

"Look," said the Rabbit, "your Tricky-stick is helping me again."

Soon the Hedgehog dragged the Rabbit home, where Mrs. Rabbit and the little ones were waiting for him.

Everyone was glad to see them.

"If not for your magic Tricky-stick, I'd never have reached home alive," said the Rabbit.

The Hedgehog smiled.

"You can have it. It's a present from me. Maybe it'll come in handy some day."



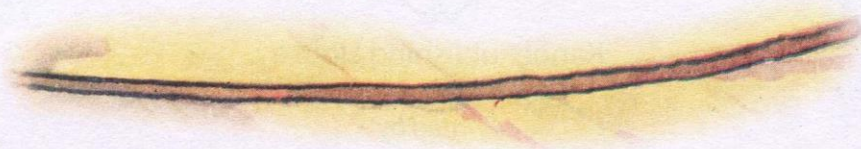
The Rabbit was so surprised he could hardly speak.

"But what about you? What will you do without such a really magic Tricky-Stick?"

"Oh, don't worry, I can always find another stick. But the trick," and here he tapped his forehead, "The trick's in here!"

Then the Rabbit understood what he meant.

"You are right. It's not the stick that counts, but a smart head and a kind heart!"



The Tricky Stick
V. Suteyev

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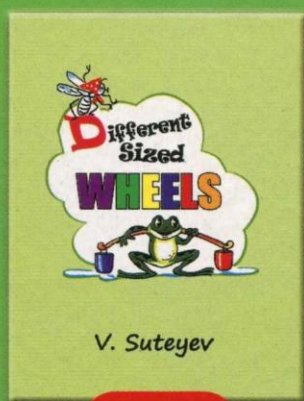
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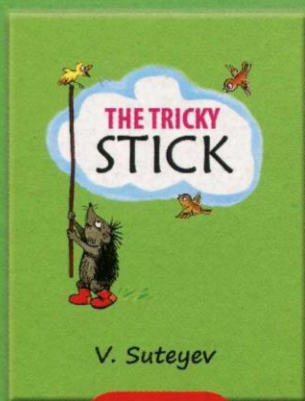
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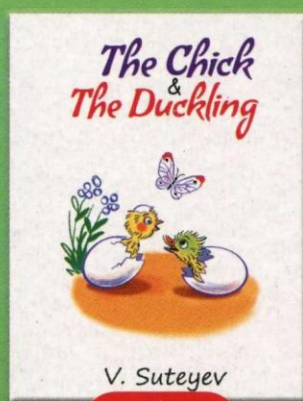
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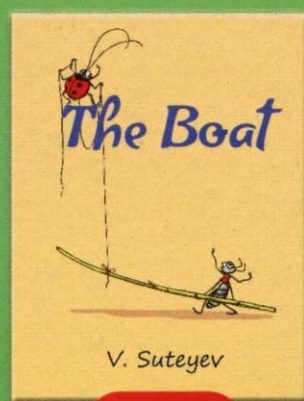
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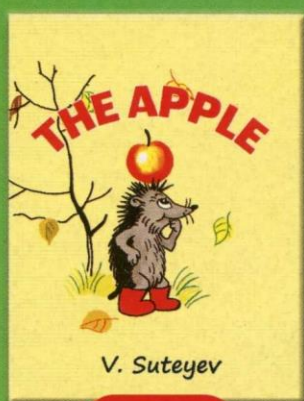
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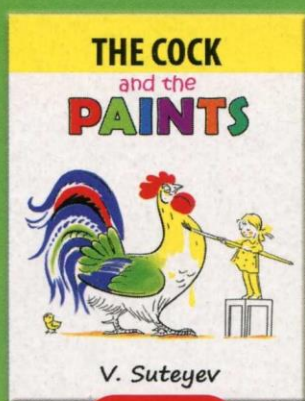
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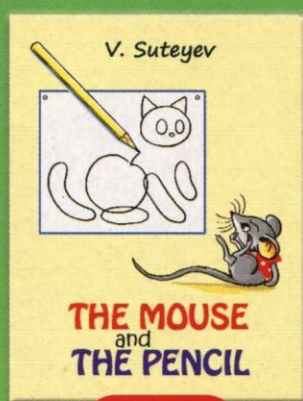
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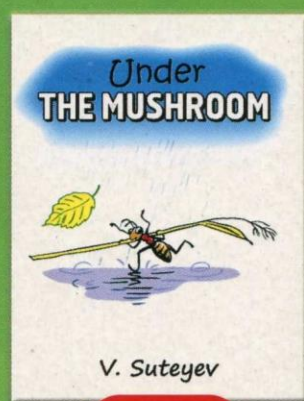
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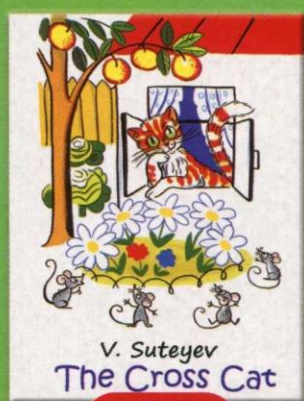
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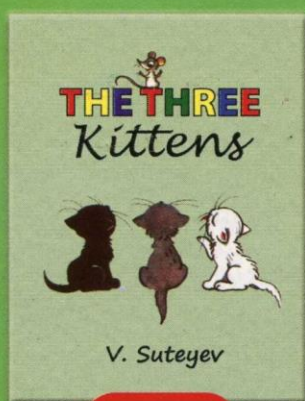
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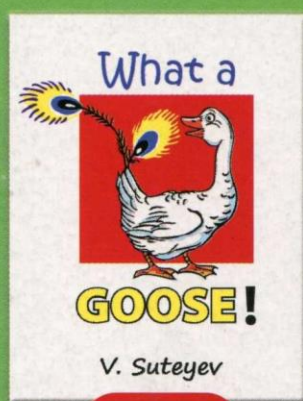
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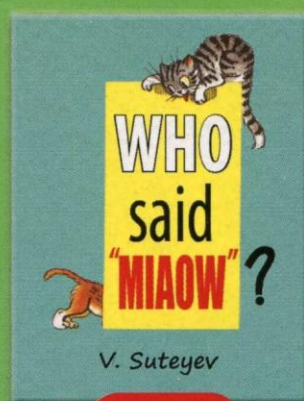
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